

Remarks

Amendments to the Claims

Applicants have provided both a marked and unmarked (clean) listing of the claims to facilitate examination.

Rejection of the claims under 35 USC §112:

Claims 7 and 19 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, first paragraph, as being indefinite for lack of antecedent basis for the term electron withdrawing group in steps (b) of the claims. Applicants believe the amendments made to the claim obviate the rejection.

Applicants request reconsideration of this §112 rejection.

Rejection of the claims under 35 USC §102:

Claims 7-11 and 19-23 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Pierce catalog as evidenced by Arpicco et al. Applicants have amended the claims to obviate the rejection. Specifically, Applicants have amended claims 7 and 19 to recite a disulfide bond-containing crosslinking agent containing the claimed components. It is the Applicants' opinion that none of the reagents in the Pierce catalog contain all of the properties recited in the Applicants' claims. The reagents taught by Pierce to not contain a disulfide bond, an electron withdrawing group, and two reactive groups (one on either side of the disulfide bond). Further, reaction of the reagents taught by Pierce other components results in loss of the electron withdrawing group and cleavage of the disulfide bond. Applicants request reconsideration of this §102 rejection.

Support for the amendments to claims 8 and 20 can be found in the specification on pages 5, 7, 9-10, 11-12, 14 , and 16-17.

Double Patenting:

Claims 7-11 and 19-23 have been rejected on the ground of nonstatutory obviousness-type double patenting as being unpatentable over claim 1-9 of U.S. Patent No. 6,936,729. It is the Applicants' opinion that the amended claims are patentably distinct from claims 1-9 of U.S. Patent 6,936,729.

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Reply to Office action of **07/13/2006**

The Examiner's rejections are now believed to be overcome by this response to the Office Action. In view of Applicants' amendment and arguments, it is submitted that claims 7, 8, 19, and 20 should be allowable.

Respectfully submitted,

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I hereby certify that this correspondence is being facsimile transmitted to the USPTO or deposited with the United States Postal Service with sufficient postage as express mail in an envelope addressed to: Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450 on this date: Sep. 26, 2006.

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